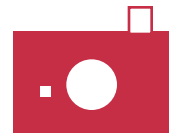


1999-2000 Louisiana State Education Progress Report



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Louisiana Department of Education
Cecil J. Picard, Superintendent
February 2001

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Appreciation is extended to students and staff of schools at which the pictures for this publication were taken. The cooperation of photographers whose work is featured in this publication and of the newspapers that provided reprints is also acknowledged. Appreciation is also extended to Mr. Allen Schulenberg for his efforts in coordinating the development of this report.

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A Word From Your State Superintendent



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The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Louisiana Department of Education are proud to present the 1999-2000 Louisiana State Education Progress Report. This document - an annual, state level “report card” for public education - is a wonderful resource for parents, educators, and the general public providing a comprehensive assessment of our educational effectiveness. This report also contains information that is valuable for all education stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of educational improvement programs statewide.

In the fall of 1999, the State embarked upon implementation of a bold, new school accountability program, beginning in grades K-8. (High schools will be added to the accountability system in the fall of 2001.) Schools and students alike were made responsible for increasing student achievement. Students were expected to meet higher standards; schools were expected to show continual growth. Data from year two of the Louisiana School Accountability Program clearly show that we are on the right track. Test scores on both the LEAP21 and The Iowa Tests are improving, and the majority of schools are making significant progress toward meeting their growth targets. Class sizes are smaller, attendance is up, and the number of dropouts is starting to come down.

Although we are proud of our accomplishments, we recognize that we still face many challenges. We face an increasingly critical shortage of certified teachers. Our dropout rate is still far too high. Our diverse student population suffers from a high poverty

rate. The number of at-risk students continues to increase, and we must improve our ability to intervene at an early age providing the kind of services and educational opportunities that will enable them to succeed.

As you can see from this report, the new accountability program has given us, for the first time, the ability to diagnose our educational problems. The prescription for success is to have the wisdom and courage to stay the course. The State Board of Elementary Education and the State Department of Education are committed to sustaining these reform efforts that have so clearly resulted in educational progress. Our goal is not only for our children to be able to compete regionally, but also for them to obtain the skills necessary to compete nationally.

Cecil J. Picard
State Superintendent of Education

“An Equal Opportunity Employer”

Executive Summary

The following is a brief summary of the findings and analyses of Louisiana educational data for the 1999-2000 school year. A detailed discussion of each indicator is included within the report.

- In the fall of 2000, the State average School Performance Score (SPS) reached 77.3, representing a gain of 7.9 points over the State average SPS of 69.4 for the previous year.
- In 1999-2000, the second year of the Louisiana School Accountability System, 721 (62%) of the schools made 50% or more progress toward their Cycle I (2000-2001) growth targets. Also showing progress toward achieving their growth targets, 203 (17%) schools made progress ranging from 8% to 49%. Of the remaining schools, 247 (21%) showed no progress or declined.
- Of the 53 schools labeled Academically Unacceptable in the fall of 1999, 21 (40%) showed considerable strides toward meeting their Cycle I growth targets with progress ranging from 50% to 313%. An additional 25 (47%) showed improvement ranging from 1% to 49% in meeting their growth targets. Only 7 (13%) of the original Academically Unacceptable schools showed no progress or declined in 1999-2000.
- Students in 2nd and 3rd grades are showing improvements in their reading abilities as measured by the statewide Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) program. In spring of 2000, 77.8% of the 2nd graders and 75.5% of the 3rd graders were reading on or above grade level as compared with 76.5% and 69.8% for the respective grades in spring of 1999.
- In the second year of the newly implemented LEAP 21 tests, in English Language Arts (ELA), the percent of 4th graders who scored at the Basic or higher achievement levels increased from 55% to 56%. For the 8th graders, however, the improvement in ELA results was significant, with 54% scoring at the Basic or higher achievement levels, as compared with 44% in spring 1999. The 4th grade Mathematics results indicated a sizeable improvement with 49% of the students (compared with 41% in the prior year) scoring Basic or higher. Mathematics results among 8th graders indicated that 46% scored Basic or higher as compared with 39% in spring 1999.

- For the new LEAP 21 Science and Social Studies tests, the percents of 4th grade students scoring at the Basic or higher achievement levels were 52% and 53% respectively. For the same tests, the percents for 8th graders were 46% and 52%, respectively.
- On The Iowa Tests, Louisiana students showed marked improvement by moving up two national percentile rank points in every grade. Students in the 3rd and 6th grades had national percentile ranks of 47 while 5th, 7th, and 9th graders had national percentile ranks of 46. Although, the Louisiana students are still 3 to 4 points below the national percentile rank of 50, we are moving in the right direction.
- Following two years of improvement, the Louisiana ACT average composite score remains the same as last year at 19.6. The national ACT average composite score has remained at 21.0 for the past four years. The state and national ACT averages are based on public and nonpublic school students' scores. The average ACT composite score for first-time college freshmen who graduated from either public or nonpublic high schools increased from 20.2 in the fall of 1998 to 20.4 in the fall of 1999.
- The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) average verbal score for Louisiana students increased one point from last year: 561 to 562. The average mathematics score remained the same as last year: 558. The national verbal score remained at 505 while the national mathematics score increased from 511 to 514. Between 1989 and 2000, the average SAT verbal score increased 13 points and the average mathematics score has increased 24 points for Louisiana high school students.
- Statewide, the proportion of public high school graduates attending Louisiana colleges on a full time basis in the fall of 1999 was 42% (16,055 students). Compared to the previous year, the percent of these first-time freshmen requiring developmental courses has decreased from 46% to 42%.
- The public school student population for 1999-2000 was 755,207 students, representing a decrease of 1.4% from last year.

- Statewide, 58.8% of all students participated in the free or reduced-priced lunch program during the 1999-2000 school year, reflecting a slight increase from 57.6% in 1998-99.
- The statewide student attendance rate improved from last year by one half-percentage point to 94%. This modest increase in the attendance rate is significant, as it represents approximately 3,800 additional students who were present on any given school day. However, Louisiana had an average of approximately 45,000 students who were absent on any given school day.
- The in-school suspension rate for 1999-2000 increased slightly over the prior year, while the out-of-school suspension rate declined. Expulsion rates showed no significant change. Statewide, approximately 65,000 (8.3%) of the students received in-school suspensions, while 75,000 (9.6%) were suspended out-of-school. There were about 2,000 students who received in-school expulsions, while 2,800 were expelled out-of-school.
- In 1998-99, 20,923 (9.4%) students dropped out in grades 9-12. This total was a decline of 0.5% (1,404 students) from the previous year.
- Public school class size continued its trend of getting smaller. Compared with 1998-99 data, the percent of small classes (1-20 students) increased from 36.9% to 40.3%, while the percent of large classes (27 or more students) decreased from 24.6% to 23.4%.



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INTRODUCTION

The vision of the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) is to lead the state in the development of a world class educational system that fosters lifelong learning and that places a high value on education. Under the guidance of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (SBESE), the LDE proposes initiatives and collaborates with the Governor's office and the Legislature to design and implement new educational programs.

As described in this publication, the Department is engaged in significant projects designed to bring about school improvement. These endeavors are aimed at achieving the LDE's mission of providing visionary leadership that seeks to identify educational and related needs of the people and to provide quality services that meet those needs, thus enhancing the quality of life for all Louisiana citizens.

Implementation of Louisiana's Accountability System

In the fall of 1999, the School Accountability System was implemented in Louisiana for schools containing any of the grade levels kindergarten through eighth (K-8). Rather than being punitive in nature, Louisiana's accountability system focuses on the continual growth of schools, using statewide testing programs, school attendance, and dropout data to assess school performance. The School Accountability System has five key components, as shown in [Exhibit 1](#).

Component 1—High Curriculum Standards. In the on-going effort to raise educational performance, the LDE substantially upgraded the curriculum and content standards for public school students. Based on these higher curricular standards, the SBESE set 10-year and 20-year educational goals for all Louisiana schools that depict the educational performance level expected of each school. Defined in terms of School Performance Scores (SPS), the 10-year goal was set at 100 and the 20-year goal was set at 150.

Component 2—Assessment Program. A new, rigorous assessment program for Louisiana students began in spring of the 1998-1999 school year, with two main measures of achievement:

- The new criterion-referenced tests (CRT), or the LEAP 21 tests, measure how well students master the State's content standards. The LEAP 21 tests are administered to students in 4th and 8th grades. In the spring of 2000, the English Language Arts and the Mathematics LEAP 21 tests became high-stakes tests: no 4th- or 8th-grade student scoring at the Unsatisfactory achievement level on the English Language Arts and Mathematics tests could be promoted fully to the next grade. These students were offered summer school followed by a retest opportunity in July. The new high school CRT, commonly known as the Graduation Exit Examination for the 21st century (GEE 21), has not yet been administered. The old GEE will continue to be administered at grades 10 and 11 until the new test has been completely phased in.
- The norm-referenced tests, or The Iowa Tests, compare the performance of Louisiana students to the performance of students nationally. The Iowa Tests are administered to students in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9.

Component 3—School Performance Monitoring and Reporting. In the fall of 1999, baseline School Performance Scores (SPS) were released for all schools containing grades in the K-8 range, using 1998-1999 test data and the 1997-1998 attendance and dropout data. (For grades 9-12, baseline SPSs will be released in the fall of 2001.) The SPS for each school is a weighted composite index, using indicators and weighting factors as outlined in [Exhibit 2](#).

Based on the 1998-1999 SPS, a performance category was assigned to each school, as described in [Exhibit 3](#). A SPS of 100 indicates that a school has reached the State's 10-year goal, while a score of 150 indicates achievement of the 20-year goal.

After the SPS for each accountability school was calculated, a two-year Growth Target was set, defining the minimum expected growth that a school must achieve in order to be on track for meeting the State's 10-year goal. In the fall of 2001 and every two years thereafter, in addition to Performance Categories, all schools will be assigned Growth Labels, as described in [Exhibit 4](#). All schools are expected to improve. Schools performing at an unacceptable level or not meeting their growth target will receive assistance and/or undergo corrective actions.

An important part of Component 3 is the reporting of accountability information. Statewide accountability results as well as various other relevant educational data are used to compile three important reports:

- the *1999-2000 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*, a state-level overview of education for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders;
- the *District Composite Reports (DCRs)*, prepared for each of the 66 Louisiana public school districts, with available longitudinal data for trend analysis; and
- the *School Report Cards* issued in October 2000, containing the second year accountability results for each public school with grade levels in the K-8 range.

The state- and district-level reports were provided to district superintendents, school principals, and numerous public and university libraries. Copies of the *1999-2000 School Report Cards* were delivered to principals for distribution to all parents. Furthermore, all reports, along with other relevant educational material, are displayed on the LDE Web site (<http://www.louisianaschools.net>). The *State Report*, one *District Composite Report*, the CD-ROM format of the *DCR*, and one *School Report Card* are displayed in [Exhibit 5](#).

Component 4—Corrective Actions and Assistance. In the fall of 1999, the State began assisting districts with the K-8 “Academically Unacceptable” schools in Level I Corrective Actions.

- *District Assistance Teams (DATs)*, after being trained by the LDE, conducted a comprehensive needs assessment, assisted in the development of school improvement plans, and examined the use of school resources in all schools labeled as “Academically Unacceptable.”
- The legislature provided a *School Improvement Fund* to assist these schools.
- As a pilot program for the first two years of the accountability plan, *Distinguished Educators (DEs)* began assisting some Level I schools. In future years, DEs will assist Levels II and III schools only. Levels I-III are explained in [Exhibit 6](#).

Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school boards are expected to make extensive efforts to improve student achievement at poor-performing schools. When a school fails to show sufficient progress after receiving LDE assistance, it will be placed in a corrective action process, which may ultimately lead to its closure. Inadequate growth from one two-year growth cycle to the next will cause the school to be placed in higher and more intensive levels of Corrective Action.

To exit Corrective Actions, an “Academically Unacceptable” school must move its SPS above 30 and achieve its Growth Target. A school with a SPS above 30 must attain its Growth Target to exit Corrective Actions.

Component 5—Recognition. The LDE closely monitors the progress of schools against interim 2-year goals as well as long-term 10-and 20-year goals. Schools showing progress will be recognized. The SBESE has recommended that schools receive monetary rewards when they meet or exceed their Growth Targets AND show growth in the performance of students who are classified as high poverty and/or special education.

Although rewards will be granted to the school, the distribution of reward funds will be decided by school personnel, with the stipulation that monetary rewards cannot be used for salary stipends. Other forms of recognition will also be provided for schools that meet or exceed Growth Targets.

Contents of this Report

This report presents information and analyses regarding various educational indicators for 1,533 Louisiana public schools. The report also provides educational indicator data describing K-8 performance results for the 1,173 schools in the accountability model for the 1999-2000 school year. In almost all cases, 1999-2000 school year data were used. However, since current dropout and financial indicator data were not yet available when this report went to press, 1998-1999 data were used for these indicators.

This publication analyzes school performance results at the state level for schools in the Louisiana accountability system, which is designed to give schools a full two-year cycle in which to exhibit growth. It is important to remember that the 1999-2000 data reported and analyzed in this publication represent results for one school year only. Performance Categories and Growth Labels for the 1999-2000 school year are not reported because these labels will not be assigned until the culmination of the two-year cycle at the end of the 2000-2001 school year.



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School Performance Results and Analysis

The complex nature of education is impacted by many factors, ranging from school environment and quality of instruction, to socioeconomic conditions and various cultural influences. [Exhibit 7](#) shows key indicators that are related to student learning in a school setting. These indicators must be viewed together to provide a comprehensive view of the condition of public education.

This section begins with a brief introduction of the Louisiana public school system, followed by a detailed discussion on the 1999-2000 performance results for the accountability schools with relevant analyses and their relationships with various education indicators.

The Louisiana Public School System

There are 66 public school districts in Louisiana, operating 1,533 public schools. To provide an equitable basis for comparing school and district-level results, the schools were placed into the four categories of elementary, middle (or junior high), high, and combination (PK-12) schools, based on the grade levels they serve.

The accountability system, implemented in the fall of 1999, included only schools that had grades in the K-8 range. Based on this criterion, the 1999-2000 accountability system included 1,173 schools.

Most accountability schools were in the elementary and middle/junior high categories, with some schools from the other two categories as well. High school grade levels (9-12) will be included in the accountability system for the first time in the fall of 2001. [Exhibit 8](#) provides further information on all Louisiana public schools as well as the schools comprising the 1999-2000 accountability system. [Exhibit 9](#) provides an overview of school types and student population figures in the Louisiana public school system.

School Accountability Performance Results

As described in the introduction section of this report, the School Accountability System dictates that School Performance Scores (SPS) be assigned to each school according to a formula using LEAP 21 test scores (60% weight), The Iowa Tests scores (30% weight), and data on attendance and/or dropouts (10% weight). The SPSs determine the School Performance Categories, according to the SPS ranges shown in [Exhibit 10](#).

Furthermore, the Louisiana Accountability system specifies that schools are assigned Performance Categories and Growth Targets once every two years rather than every year. In the fall of 2000, although schools were not assigned new Performance Categories, new SPS were calculated to give schools a sense of their progress during the 1999-2000 school year.

- In the fall of 2000, the State average SPS reached 77.3, representing a gain of 7.9 points over the State average SPS of 69.4 for the previous year.
- In the fall of 2000, of the 1,173 schools in the accountability system, 42 (3.6%) of the schools scored a SPS of 30 or below while 173 (14.7%) of the schools achieved a SPS of 100 or more.
- As shown in [Exhibit 11](#), of the 1,171 schools (excluding 2 new charter schools) in the 1999-2000 accountability system, 487 (42%) showed appreciable progress (ranging from 100% to 790%) toward achieving their Cycle I Growth Targets. The progress ranged from 5.0 to 47.2 in terms of SPS points. Conversely, 245 (21%) of the schools experienced a decline (ranging from -24.2 to -0.1 in SPS points) in their SPS as compared to last year's results.
- [Exhibit 12](#) depicts the original 1998-1999 School Performance Categories for the 245 declining schools.
- Of the 53 Academically Unacceptable schools identified in 1998-1999, 21 (40%) showed considerable strides toward meeting their Growth Targets with progress ranging from 50% to 313%. An additional 25 (47%) showed improvement ranging from 1% to 49% in meeting their growth targets. Only 7 (13%) of the original Academically Unacceptable schools either showed no progress or declined in 1999-2000.